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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NAIROBI 000796

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DEPT FOR IO/UNP, AF/E AND A/S FRAZER

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SUBJECT: Somalia -- Conversation with TFG President Yusuf

REF: A) Nairobi 734 B) Yates-A/S Frazer email 03/18/2008

Classified by Special Envoy John Yates for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

Summary

¶1. (C) Ambassador and Special Envoy Yates met with President Yusuf to discuss reconciliation efforts, the humanitarian situation, the fight against terrorism, and security concerns. The President agreed to take action on appointing a single point-of-contact in the TFG on humanitarian issues, a longstanding request of the humanitarian community. An April visit to New York for a Security Council meeting was also discussed. End Summary.

Flexibility on Dialogue

¶2. (C) On March 17 the Ambassador and Special Envoy Yates met with President Yusuf, who was briefly in Nairobi on his return from the OIC summit in Dakar (where reportedly he received expressions of support from Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia) and before he departed for Kampala for a meeting of African leaders organized by Libyan President Qaddafi. The conversation was a follow up to SE Yates meeting on March 10 (Ref A) and focused on reconciliation efforts, the humanitarian situation, and security concerns.

¶3. (C) In marked contrast to prior statements, Yusuf said that while he remains opposed to dialogue with well-known terrorists, "if the Americans support it" he is willing to get behind discussions with a much broader swath of the opposition than he has previously indicated. Echoing language used by Prime Minister Hussein, Yusuf said, "let them [Islamic extremists] refuse to meet with us." However, Yusuf also spoke of negotiating from a position of strength.

He said he told the Prime Minister that they cannot move forward on reconciliation unless the TFG gets security under control and a financially sound and functioning government in place.

Security Forces and Training

¶4. (C) The President expressed concern about the limited engagement of AMISOM forces. While al-Shabaab may be gaining ground in the countryside, Yusuf lamented that AMISOM forces are not permitted to fight actively. According to Yusuf, the Ugandans are under instruction not to do anything unless they are attacked in their camps. "That needs to be changed," he said. Ideally, Yusuf would like to have a UN peace-making force in Somalia, composed of Arab and other Muslim soldiers (Malaysia, Turkey, and Senegal were mentioned) along with other African, UK, and U.S. soldiers, with AMISOM coming

under the UN umbrella. With regard to Ethiopian forces, Yusuf said he was assured they would remain until June, but after that there were no guarantees.

15. (C) Yusuf expressed appreciation for Ethiopian training of security forces. Approximately 1,000 police and an equal number of military forces have undergone training in Ethiopia. A new group is soon to begin training. However, the supply of potential trainees is growing thin. Puntland forces are engaged along the border with Somaliland due to the longstanding conflict in and around Las Anod, and they can no longer spare additional militia for Mogadishu. The country needs 20,000 troops, said Yusuf, as well as equipment, logistics, training, money for salaries, and other essentials the TFG cannot afford. With what is available now the TFG can attempt only to defend Mogadishu.

United Nations Visit

16. (C) Yusuf and his staff have been in contact with UN SRSG Ould-Abdallah about traveling to New York for a Security Council presentation on Somalia. There had been talk about a May visit when the UK would chair the Security Council. However, SRSG Ould-Abdallah expressed a preference for April, which would accommodate South Africa's request to hold the meeting with Yusuf when they are in the chairmanship. Following subsequent discussions the same day with Ould-Abdallah and Yusuf's staff it was determined that April would be a more suitable time for a Security Council visit (Ref B).

Humanitarian Situation

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17. (C) The Ambassador urged Yusuf to do what he can to remove obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and to appoint a single point-of-contact in the TFG for the humanitarian community. (Comment: The point of contact issue is an important one for the humanitarian community. They have urged the Prime Minister to identify someone, and he has agreed in principle, but there has been no action on this issue. End Comment). Yusuf claimed that NGOs in general, and Somali civil society in particular, are tribally based, focused only on narrow personal interests, and motivated solely by money. "If you only knew what I knew you would hate these people too," he said. While he asserted that Arabs are financing the NGOs and extremists are running them, he assured us he would instruct the Prime Minister to appoint a central point of contact on humanitarian issues.

RANNEBERGER